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THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS AND THE MISSISSIPPI DEMOCRATS¹

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The shelving of Van Buren at the Baltimore convention in 1844 and the selection of Polk as the leader of the party committed to the immediate annexation of Texas was, as is well known, primarily the work of a group of Mississippi politicians led by Robert J. Walker. The action of these delegates in thus violating their instructions, on the whole, met with the full approval of their constituents.² With truth Walker has been styled "the architect of

¹The writer desires to acknowledge his obligation to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, where most of the material upon which this paper is based was obtained. The admirable organization of this valuable collection, and the never failing courtesy of the Director, Dr. Dunbar Rowland, combine to render the student's task an unusually pleasant one.

²By both the Democratic and the Whig journals within the state the nomination of the ex-president was confidently expected, though a leading Whig organ declared the leaders of his party had been looking for an excuse for three years to drop Van Buren. By some the defeat of Governor Runnels as far back as 1835 was cited as evidence of "how heavy a weight Van Burenism is for a candidate in Mississippi." At the Democratic state convention held in Jackson on January 8, Van Buren's only competitor for the leading place on the ticket was John C. Calhoun, who received only one-third as many votes as his competitor. The nomination of Van Buren was made unanimous and to Polk fell the second place on the ticket, an honor which had been accorded him four years before. It is true the more radical Democratic organs threatened to bolt the ticket in the event of Van Buren's nomination, but this was solely on account of his opposition to immediate annexation; the more conservative journals, while regretting his attitude upon annexation, urged the party leaders to stand by the nominees of the national convention. "The South must not alienate the Democracy of the North." It should be noted that the odium which Van Buren is said to have incurred in the South is reflected, so far as Mississippi is concerned, only in the prints

the democratic imperialism under which Texas was annexed," but he was only the foremost of a coterie of aggressive Mississippi politicians that included Jefferson Davis, who, with Walker, was eager to take over all of Mexico,³ and A. G. Brown, a remarkable leader who represented the small slaveholders and the non-slaveholders of his state, and who was more radical than Davis in his views upon annexation and slavery.⁴

Mississippi afforded a fruitful soil for the propaganda of Walker, Davis, Brown, Foote and Huston in furtherance of the cause of annexation. Before the independence of Texas was achieved, voices were raised in the state in advocacy of annexation. Highly significant in this connection is the report of a select committee of the legislature in 1837 which declared "the annexation of Texas is essential to the safety and repose of the southern states."⁵ Furthermore, in Mississippi as elsewhere in the South annexation in 1844 "was still a popular measure with most Whig voters."⁶ Typ-

of the Whig party, whose editors referred to him as the "didapper little politician," and as a matter of course assailed the "execrable malpractices of his administration." *Pittsburg Bulletin*, Dec. 10, 1835; *Woodville Republican*, Apr. 11, 1840, May 27, 1843; *Mississippi Free Trader*, Jan. 11, 1843, Jan. 17, May 15, 1844; *Sentinel and Expositor*, Apr. 16, 1844; *Vicksburg Sentinel*, May 17, 1844; *Port Gibson Herald*, May 23, 1844; *Mississippian*, May 15, 22, 29, 1844; *Constitutionalist*, May 11, 1844. Cf. Cole, *Whig Party in the South*, 12-13.

³Cf. Dodd, *Statesmen of the Old South*, 185.

⁴Cf. Hearon, "Mississippi and the Compromise of 1850," *Pubs. Miss. Hist. Soc.*, XIV. 33. Governor Brown's name deserves to be recalled, if for no other reason, on account of the splendid services he rendered his state in laying the foundations of a system of public school education. His zeal was probably responsible for the passage of the act chartering the state university in 1844; while in response to his appeal the legislature passed the act of March 4, 1846, the "first statute in Mississippi contemplating a uniform and general system of common schools." Edward Mayes, *History of Education in Mississippi*, 278-279 (Washington, 1899).

⁵*Niles' Weekly Register*, LII, 258.

⁶Cole, *Whig Party in the South*, 109. Democratic organs claimed four-fifths and even nine-tenths of the people of Mississippi were in favor of annexation. *Mississippian*, May 15, 1844; *Free Trader*, May 29, 1844; *Columbus Democrat*, Mch. 1, 1845; *Raymond Gazette*, Sept. 19, 1845. The *Constitutionalist*, a Whig organ, declared after the election, that it was absolutely necessary that Texas form part of the Union. (Mch. 27, 1845). All through the campaign Whig leaders and newspapers protested that they were not opposed to the annexation of Texas *per se*, but only to the manner of its accomplishment. In other words, partisan considerations overrode what they admitted was for the best interests of their section. The very fact that Tyler and Calhoun had proposed the scheme was enough to condemn it in the eyes of every orthodox Whig. And after

ical of Whig sentiment until the Texas question became in the South a matter of party strife, was the declaration of a leading Whig journal which welcomed the annexation issue as showing who were for "Texas and liberty to the South, or against Texas and white freedom in the South"; for the acquisition of Texas would give the South an equality in the Union by which she could maintain her rights and meet the North upon fair ground.⁷

While there is abundant evidence of the genuineness of the sentiment in Mississippi with reference to the desire for annexation, it would be a mistake to suppose that annexation was the only issue that was felt to be involved in the presidential election of that year. Responsible spokesmen of the Democratic party deemed other matters besides the acquisition of Texas to be at stake; party doctrine touching the questions of a national bank, the tariff, internal improvements, are a continually recurring theme in the public prints, in the speeches of campaign orators, and in well-nigh numberless resolutions adopted during the summer and fall of 1844 in meetings held throughout the state in furtherance of the cause of annexation.⁸ As proof of this may be cited the conservative expressions of the *Mississippian*, one of the leading organs within the state, whose tone at times resembled that of the leading Whig journals. This paper was friendly to annexation,

the appearance of Clay's letter upon the subject, the only course left his followers was to subordinate their real desires in the matter of annexation to the exigencies of political expediency. "We go for Henry Clay, Texas or no Texas," sums up the attitude of the party in Mississippi, as elsewhere in the South. But the significant thing is that prior to 1844 the Whigs of the state were eager for the acquisition of Texas on purely sectional grounds. Cf. *Constitutionalist*, May 15, 1844.

⁷*Daily Courier* (Natchez) in *Woodville Republican*, June 4, 1836; *Weekly Courier and Journal*, Feb. 27, Mch. 17, 24, 1837.

⁸Thus the Democratic Association of Adams county affirmed that in the election of 1844 the voters had declared against a national bank, the destruction of the veto power, and the assumption of debts, in addition to deciding the question of annexation. A correspondent writing under the designation of "Old Republican," protested that while so far as Mississippi was concerned the cry was "immediate annexation," that was only one of the questions to be settled by the forthcoming election. "Is it not apparent," asked the writer, "to the most common minds that in the North and throughout the world, there is a moral influence being brought to bear against slavery which, if it does not preclude utterly the admission of another state into the Union, will make it dangerous to attempt it? . . . It is to the northern Democracy the South is indebted for its institutions." *Free Trader*, Nov. 26, 1844; *Mississippian*, July 5, 1844.

and readily admitted that the South favored the acquisition of Texas because her influence now on the wane in the councils of the nation would be greatly augmented by the increase of slave territory, but the editor refused "to sink the other questions into insignificance," and deplored the hot-headed movements of those who would make the annexation question the sole issue of the campaign. The South should beware of deserting its "natural allies," the Democracy of the North; the disunionist proceedings of any group of southern men as well as the activities of the abolitionist faction at the North were condemned in bitter terms; the southern people had ample security for their rights in the constitution. "So long as the Union lasts, the South is safe."⁹

If further proof were needed of the fact that other issues besides annexation were believed to be at stake in this campaign,¹⁰ it is to be found in the addresses of the central state committee of the Democratic party, among whose twelve members occur the names of Quitman and Roger Barton. These addresses thus represent the views of the official spokesmen of the party in Mississippi, and in one of the addresses annexation is almost dealt with as if it were a side issue; for only the barest allusion is made to Clay's position on the Texas question. Both of the documents on the other hand take up twenty columns of the newspapers in setting forth in a most exhaustive manner the Democratic creed touching a national bank, the tariff, internal improvements, and distribution of the revenue derived from the proceeds of the public lands. On the whole the question of annexation is dealt with in a temperate manner in the address first put forth,—as "possibly paramount to any or all of other great questions," though if war with Mexico must come as a result of redeeming the pledge of the treaty of 1803, let it come. It was argued that the extension of slave territory would render slave labor more valuable, while not increasing the evils of slavery, for the free blacks could be colonized in Mexico. Reference is made to the economic argument that Texas as an ally or a dependency of England would enable that country to derive its supply of cotton from the region beyond the Sabine; granting that the extension of the national

⁹*Mississippian*, Feb. 21, Apr. 3, May 1, 15, 29, June 8, July 5, 12, 15, 26, Aug. 2, Sept. 27, Oct. 30, 1844.

¹⁰Smith, *Annexation of Texas*, 298.

territory might depress the value of lands in the South, none but speculators would suffer. Those who predicted disunion in consequence of annexation were little better than traitors, "who would rend asunder the Union rather than new States should exercise the constitutional right of being admitted into the Union."¹¹

Whig party organs complained bitterly of the action of prominent Democratic leaders, who canvassed the state from one end to the other, haranguing their audiences upon the subject of "democracy and Texas." In the language of their opponents, denunciation of Henry Clay constituted "the weapon of their warfare and annexation was the burthen of their song." But while the necessity of annexation on account of the sectional interest involved were stressed by Huston, Quitman, Foote and others, this was by no means the sole issue to which reference was made in their speeches. For a number of reasons the annexation of Texas seemed a desirable thing to the people of Mississippi just as it did to those of other southern states. One of the Texan commissioners to the United States referred, though with exaggeration, to the "run mad annexation excitement in the southern states."¹² As has been pointed out, the subject of annexation was a theme upon which it was easy for orators to kindle enthusiasm among those who gathered at barbecues during the summer months.¹³ "Poke & Texas, that's the thing, it goes like wild-fire with the folks as kant rede, nor don't git no papers." Thus did a disgusted Whig sum up the argument for the democratic nomi-

¹¹*Mississippian*, Aug. 9, 16, 1844. The two addresses are identical with the exception of the portion dealing with Texas. The most interesting part of both manifestoes is a section entitled, "What is Democracy?" All the "beauties of the democratic faith" are said to flow from the memorable declarations of Jefferson and his compeers that all men are created free and equal. "Many of our opponents are opposed to poor men voting or taking part in the administration of the government. They estimate a man's talents and virtues according to his acres and dollars"; they would create distinctions in society, would elevate the few at the expense of the many; in their view government is a "divine thing that must not be touched by the rude hands of the people." On the contrary, the upholders of the divine principle of the immortal declaration favored universal suffrage, regardless of property qualifications. Professor Dodd has pointed out that the last reference to the Declaration of Independence by the Democratic party in its national platform was in 1840.

¹²Cf. Garrison, *Dip. Cor. Tex.*, I, 208, 238-239, 270.

¹³The largest and most enthusiastic meetings of this nature were those held by the Whigs. *Port Gibson Herald*, July 4, 18, 1844.

nees so far as the indiscriminating masses were concerned.¹⁴ By many the desirability of annexation was put upon grounds of broad national interest, though it is difficult to believe that such considerations outweighed those of a sectional cast. It was asserted that the peace, security and interests of the whole nation required immediate annexation to the United States, whose good faith was pledged to carry out the treaties of 1803 and 1819. In Mississippi as elsewhere a potent consideration was "a spontaneous desire to regain a valuable piece of property that had been surrendered imprudently and could now be had at a bargain."¹⁵ It is not surprising that on the whole the legal considerations involved received comparatively little attention from popular orators and partisan editors. It seemed to be generally assumed that all doubt as to any constitutional impediment touching annexation had been resolved "by the unanswerable argument of our illustrious fellow-citizen, Martin Van Buren." Among the reasons assigned by the legislature for instructing their representatives in congress "to urge zealously and perseveringly the immediate and indissoluble annexation by treaty of the republic of Texas to the United States" was the fact that the two countries were contiguous in geographical position, inhabited by kindred people, spoke a kindred language, produced the same staples, cherished the same commercial interests, and were animated by the same love of liberty.¹⁶ It may well be believed, however, that such considerations were subordinate to the political motive, for previous legislatures had linked the annexation question with the perpetuity of slavery in the most emphatic manner.¹⁷

As might be expected, much stress was placed by writers and speakers upon the so-called economic arguments for annexation; appeal was made to the letters of Jackson and of Walker in which had been set forth the civil, military and commercial importance of Texas.¹⁸ Annexation it was asserted would open up new mar-

¹⁴This reporter had been one of a number who had listened to speeches at Ripley by Foote and Davis. Like many another Whig he saw or professed to see in the Texas movement nothing more than an issue of narrow proportions: "I guess the General [Foote] has lots of land out in Texas."

¹⁵Smith, *Annexation of Texas*, 320.

¹⁶*Free Trader*, Apr. 3, 1844.

¹⁷*House Journal* for 1837, 158.

¹⁸*Holly Springs Guard*, May 1, 1844.

kets for the manufactures of northern states, for the agricultural products of the middle and western states, all of which would involve an increase of shipping and an expansion of commerce.¹⁹ This argument put forth by Huston in an elaborate exposition of the reasons for immediate annexation was intended to reconcile northern sentiment to an increase of slave territory; for first and last Huston was the most extreme advocate of annexation because of its bearing upon the question of slavery. Others argued that annexation would bring a reduction in the price of lands in consequence of the extension of the national domain, and would prevent Texas as an independent state from supplying the English market with cotton to the ruin of the southern planter.²⁰ Governor Brown dwelt upon the danger of Texas as a rival in the production of cotton in case that country became a part of the dominions of England.²¹ Texas as a free-labor nation, argued the *Free Trader*, would glut English markets not only with cotton, but with tobacco and rice as well.²²

Reference has been made to the fact that during the years that intervened between the attainment of independence and the emergence of annexation as an issue in party politics, deep concern was manifested in Mississippi at the danger that was believed to menace the South and its interests unless Texas were annexed. Men in Mississippi as elsewhere in the lower South had come to believe that the annexation of Texas was all essential to the preservation of the Union. It would have been most surprising, therefore, if in the campaign of 1844 this argument had not received cordial and wide-spread support. Second only in importance to what may be termed this sectional motive was the deep-seated anti-British sentiment which manifested itself mostly, though by no means exclusively, in the newspapers. At no period

¹⁹*Mississippian*, May 30, 1844; Cf. *Ripley Advertiser*, Mch. 22, 1845. The *Independent Democrat*, Feb. 17, 1844, declared one of the principal reasons why the admission of Texas was favored was because it involved an extension of the principles of free trade.

²⁰For an allusion to this argument, see Garrison, *Dip. Cor. Tex.*, II, 222; Cf. Reeves, *Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk*, 92.

²¹*MS. Executive Journal*. Dept. Archives and History.

²²*Free Trader*, Oct. 16, 1844. Though never losing an opportunity to set forth the iniquities of a protective tariff, this stalwart democratic journal deplored the ruin of tariffs and manufactures in consequence of an independent Texas throwing open her ports to the commerce of the world, thereby deluging the Mississippi valley with goods duty free.

of our history perhaps has what Secretary John Hay once characterized as a mad-dog hatred of England, been more pronounced than it was in the discussions which took place in connection with the subject of annexation. And one of, if not the chief, causes of this antipathy for England was dread of that country's abolitionist designs in Texas.

In his inaugural address of January 11, 1844, Governor Brown urged that annexation under any circumstances was desirable, since such a measure was intimately connected with the prosperity of the state, in fact with its very existence as an independent member of the confederacy. England, where anti-slavery sentiment was so pronounced, was said to have proposed the total abolition of slavery in Texas, her government to reimburse the slave owners. "So long, however, as Texas maintains her independence, and adheres to her present form of government, it is not indispensable, especially if she repel, as I trust she ever will, with becoming energy, all attempts to unsettle her domestic policy on the subject of slavery. And shall we stand idly by, whilst Texas, and with her our institutions are drawn inch by inch into the meshes of a wily nation, that has never failed to do us injury?" The most important consideration was that from Texas might be carved independent states that would offset Wisconsin, Iowa, and the unsettled territory of the northwest; this would preserve the political equilibrium of the Senate, so absolutely essential to the safety of the domestic institutions of the South, increase the influence of that section in the councils of the nation, "secure to Mississippi peace in the exercise of her domestic policy, and a proud independence as a separate member of the confederacy."²³ In these words were summed up what was in all probability the most potent argument for annexation that was to be heard so often during the weeks and months that followed the nomination of Polk and Dallas. Governor T. M. Tucker, in presenting to the legislature for consideration and action a resolution unanimously passed by the legislature of Alabama advocating annexation, used these words: "I unite in opinion with the people of Alabama, in believing that the annexation of Texas to the United States, is not only indispensable to the institutions of the Southern

²³MS. *Executive Journal*.

States, but also to the peace and commerce of the United States.”²⁴ It is not difficult to believe that “the peace and commerce of the United States” was a secondary consideration in the minds of these two Mississippi governors, and that their chief concern arose from the danger that confronted their section unless more slave territory was added to the Union. The legislature of Mississippi was not slow in acting upon the suggestions of its governors; nor is this surprising in view of the action taken by previous legislatures in putting the desirability of annexation exclusively upon grounds of a sectional cast, while at the same time slavery was extolled as the very palladium of their prosperity and happiness.²⁵ The subject of annexation engaged the attention of the state legislators during the months of January and February. More than twenty pages of the senate journal are devoted to the “Address of a Citizen of Texas,” which was in the nature of a reply to the manifesto put forth by Adams and some twenty other members of congress remonstrating against the annexation of Texas. One extract may be quoted as conveying the tenor of the whole: “Texas will be the instrument in the hands of Great Britain to drive you from your homes and to wrest from you your property.”²⁶ The final vote on the preamble and resolutions adopted was 62 to 10, nine Whigs voting in the affirmative. The most significant resolution adopted declared, “That in the judgment of the Legislature, if the desired annexation should not be affected, it will be incompatible with the rights, interests and tranquillity of the United States, for any European power to obtain possession of the territory of Texas, or to secure a commanding influence in her councils; and that such an attempt would be considered by the United States as a sufficient cause for war.”²⁷

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Niles' Weekly Register*, LXIV, 173. On March 16, 1844, W. H. Hammett, a member from Mississippi, presented in the national House of Representatives resolutions “passed with great unanimity” by the legislature of his state in favor of annexation. Hammett’s attitude upon this and other questions of a sectional nature may be gathered from a single sentence of a speech delivered by him in the House the previous month: “Let the struggle then come when it might, in the South there would be no distinction between Whig and Democrat.” These same resolutions were presented by Robert J. Walker in the Senate. *Cong. Globe*, 28 Congress, 1 Session, 408, 235, 410.

²⁶*Senate Journal*, 73-94.

²⁷*Free Trader*, Apr. 3, 1844. In January a resolution was introduced in

More far-reaching in its effects so far as the outcome of the election was concerned, was the aggressive campaign carried on by the group of party leaders whose names have been mentioned above.

Among these was Jefferson Davis, who was one of the presidential electors on the Democratic ticket. In his public utterances Davis by no means confined himself to the Texas question, but took up one by one the issues which divided the two parties, dealing with them in a clear and convincing manner. High hopes were entertained by democratic journals of the future which awaited Davis as the favorable impression which he made upon his hearers increased from day to day. "He is the pride of old Warren, and is destined soon to be the pride of the State and of the whole country." "Mr. Davis is the impersonation of the true spirit of the South. He will do more to win back the former spirit and admiration of the world to her, than any man we could send to public life. We predict that he becomes the Calhoun of Mississippi."²⁸ At a democratic meeting held at Natchez on July

the House to the effect that a select committee of five members be instructed to bring in a bill declaring war against Mexico; the resolution was promptly rejected. Not quite two weeks later the Senate by a unanimous vote, including eight Whigs, adopted a set of resolutions on annexation. On February 10 the House considered the Senate resolutions concerning annexation which had been referred to a committee of eleven members. According to the *Free Trader* the theme called forth some of the "tallest speaking" which had been heard in the legislature up to that time. Among prominent Whigs who opposed the measure were J. S. Yerger, of Vicksburg, and Luke Lea, of Hinds county. A minority report was presented by George Winchester, of Natchez, the "citadel of whiggery," to the effect that it was incompatible with the rights and interests of the United States for any European government to obtain possession of the territory of Texas, or to interfere in its domestic affairs; the motion was lost by a vote of 58 to 15. An amendment to the majority report offered by Yerger of Vicksburg was also lost by a vote of 55 to 15. A leading Whig lawyer of Jackson writing to Robert J. Walker commented upon the action of the Whig members as follows: "I regret to say that the want of unanimity in our late legislature was occasioned by a few, a very few Whigs, who have thereby sealed their political destiny, and incurred universal condemnation." *House Journal*, 120, 622-623; *Senate Journal*, 195; *Free Trader*, Feb. 21, 1844.

²⁸One of the Democratic organs made mention of his "eagle look, his bold, free form and gesture," and spoke of the gentlemanly deportment and kindly feelings that marked his canvass. Davis did not escape criticism at the hands of the opposition journals, but the shafts aimed at him were devoid of malice and coarseness, in striking contrast to the attacks made upon some of the other leaders, as Foote. One Whig journal after referring to his eulogy of Calhoun at the Jackson convention, "which made some of the friends of 'Old Hickory' look sick," spoke

12 for the purpose of extolling the nominees of the Baltimore convention, one of the speakers was Colonel Davis. Among the resolutions passed on this occasion was the following: "That the democracy of this country look upon the immediate re-annexation of Texas to the family of the Union, as an act expedient and necessary for the safety, the perpetuity, the glory, and the honor of the whole nation."²⁹ There is no reason for believing that putting the annexation of Texas upon broad grounds of national interest did not meet with the entire approval of Davis; a wide gulf separated him from those extremists in the state who pronounced themselves ready to advocate disunion in the event of the failure of annexation. In a word, his attitude on the whole reflected more faithfully than did Robert J. Walker the sentiment enunciated by the latter: "It is a great question of national interest too large and comprehensive to embrace any party or section less than the whole American people"; for while Walker in his famous letter did put the annexation of Texas upon national grounds, in his pamphlet entitled "The South in Danger" he appealed to narrow sectional interests, recommending annexation solely on the ground of perpetuating and extending the South's peculiar institution. When the campaign of that summer came to an end, Davis had made a reputation for himself as an able and a zealous advocate, a talented and fearless speaker, and one whose speeches combined an unusual degree of power and elegance.³⁰ The fol-

of him as a "gentleman of pleasing manners and address, possessing a musical and well-modulated voice." Another leading Whig organ, while complimenting his courtesy and his bearing toward his opponents, charged the speaker with skimming over the questions at issue, "touching only upon those points calculated to operate upon the feelings or interests of his audience." Another Whig after listening to the "school boy candidate," spoke of the excruciating effects upon his audience when at the close of his exordium, "Jeff Davis" drew from his pocket his written speech and proceeded to deal in a laborious manner with the issues of the campaign. The leading organ of the state right element attacked Davis because the young aspirant for political honors had declared in favor of military colleges in every state where the youth might be educated at public expense; too many aristocratic notions had been instilled into him at West Point. *Vicksburg Sentinel*, June 30, Nov. 3, 1845; *Yazoo Democrat*, Sept. 10, 1845; *Columbus Democrat*, Aug. 10, 1844; *Port Gibson Herald*, July 4, 18, 1844; *Vicksburg Weekly Whig*, Aug. 16, 1844; *Raymond Gazette*, Oct. 24, 1845.

²⁹*Free Trader*, June 14, 1844.

³⁰*Mississippi Democrat*, Feb. 12, Sept. 10, 1845. A contemporary spoke of the delight it was to listen to his "soft and mellow utterances, his

lowing summer he was chosen by the democratic state convention as one of Mississippi's representatives in congress.³¹

Henry S. Foote in his advocacy of annexation emphasized the benefits to be derived solely from a sectional point of view.³² Foote possessed a vigorous mind and was a man of unbounded energy. Of limited education he made extraordinary efforts to supply the deficiencies of earlier years. Of a courteous and affable demeanor in private life, his coarse attacks upon his political opponents drew forth allusions in kind from them and from the organs of the Whig party.³³ He would assail the town Whigs as the "most incorrigible of sinners" in that they opposed a measure fraught with so much importance to both countries; from the stubborn members of that party in Natchez and other Mississippi towns nothing was to be expected; it was to the plain men of the country,—the planters—whose all was at stake, that he looked for opposition to Clay and to abolitionism.³⁴ Yet as is well known it was from these very planters, Whig in politics and owners of three-fourths of the slaves in the black belt, that the most pronounced opposition to annexation came. In fact, it was a source of frequent complaint on the part of the Whig journals that three-fourths of those who made the most fuss about Texas and abolitionism and southern rights did not possess a single slave.³⁵

No Mississippian of prominence had been more deeply stirred by the events of the Texas revolution than John A. Quitman, who threw himself with ardor into the cause of the struggling Texans.³⁶

lucid arguments, and poetic fancy." Davis, *Recollections of Mississippi and Mississippians*, 193.

³¹*Mississippi Democrat*, July 16, 1845.

³²*Independent Democrat*, July 10, 1844; *Port Gibson Herald*, July 18, 1844.

³³Cf. *Constitutionalist*, Apr. 13, 1844; *Port Gibson Herald*, July 4, 1844; *Vicksburg Weekly Whig*, Aug. 26, 1844.

³⁴Cf. *Free Trader*, June 26, 1844.

³⁵"Isn't it amusing," remarked the *Natchez Courier*, "to hear a loco-foco who never owned a negro in the world, and in all probability never will by means of honest industry, talk in the most alarming tone about the institution of slavery, and insinuating that those who own hundreds of slaves are colleaguering with the abolitionists of the North?" Cf. *Constitutionalist*, Dec. 25, 1844; *Free Trader*, Oct. 23, 1844; Cole, *Whig Party in the South*, 104; Phillips, "The Southern Whigs," *Turner Essays in American History*, 219.

³⁶Claiborne, *Life and Correspondence of John A. Quitman*, I, 139, 192-194.

Like many another of his contemporaries he had zealously supported Van Buren until the appearance of his Texas letter.³⁷ With characteristic zeal he devoted his time and energy to the canvass waged in support of the nominees of the Baltimore convention. As early as January of the presidential year General Quitman was urging the citizens of every county to hold meetings upon the subject of annexation.³⁸ At a meeting held in Jackson on Friday evening, May 10, a long series of resolutions was presented by Quitman on behalf of the committee appointed to consider the subject of "reannexation." Besides dwelling upon arguments with which we are already familiar, these alluded to the menace to the country as a whole, and especially to the southwestern states if this territory should fall under the control of England. Indicative of the aggressive attitude of Quitman was the fifth resolution which, in the light of later day events, possesses an especial interest. This affirmed, the "United States have not only the right, but are in duty bound by a just, wise, and rational exercise of their influence and power to interpose in the dissensions and wars of their neighbors, when these have a tendency to disturb the peace and security of our frontier, or threaten to destroy the happiness, prosperity, and safety of any portion of our country." Especially significant as indicating a leading motive behind the desire for expansion was the seventh resolution, which declared "Re-annexation paramount to all other political questions of the day,—beneficial to the whole country, of deep and vital interest to the people of the slave states and essential to the prosperity, repose and safety of the southwest."³⁹

A figure that became well known to the voters of Mississippi during this memorable campaign was Felix Huston. He had figured prominently in the events connected with the Texas revolution of eight years before, was at one time in command of the Texan army and would have welcomed an opportunity to invade Mexico.⁴⁰ Huston was a fiery radical, representing the attitude

³⁷*Ibid.*, I, 214.

³⁸*Southron*, Jan. 17, 1844.

³⁹A committee of ten, of which Quitman was chairman, was designated to draft a constitution and by-laws for the "Texas Annexation Association," the object of which was to promote "by all quiet, legal, and constitutional means, immediate reannexation."

⁴⁰*Cf. Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XXI, 6-18.

of the extremists in his advocacy of annexation. A Whig in politics until the Texas question became an issue in the canvass of 1844 and for a number of years a law partner of Sergeant S. Prentiss in New Orleans, he now became one of the most energetic advocates of the election of Polk and Dallas. Small in numbers, Huston and his following made up what may be termed the irreconcilables of the Democratic party so far as their attitude toward annexation was concerned.

In military affairs Huston had acted on the principle that "a short fight and long negotiation is not the way to gain a profit by victory."⁴¹ He now proceeded to put the opponents of immediate annexation on the defensive by an aggressive campaign in which extreme measures were urged in the event of annexation failing of achievement. In a democratic meeting held on July 3 at Natchez—the home of the "purse-proud speculating aristocrats"—addresses were delivered by Huston and Quitman, in the course of which the former vehemently attacked England's supposed abolitionist designs in Texas. The acquisition of Texas was depicted as being of vital importance to the South, necessary to the peace and security of the Union. Clay's letter upon the subject of Texas was assailed, and his election denounced as a great national evil; for deny it as they might, emancipation was one of the great objects of the Whig party.⁴² In an open letter ad-

⁴¹*MS.* Dept. Archives and History.

⁴²*Free Trader*, June 19, July 3, 31, 1844.

As was to be expected, this change of front on the part of one who for twenty years had been a follower of Clay led to bitter attacks being made upon Huston by the Whig journals of New Orleans and of Mississippi. These charged him with being a speculator in Texas lands, and made "the most infamous insinuations and slanders" as to General Huston's motives in advocating annexation. They made light of his argument that annexation was necessary to strengthen the South against the North, ridiculed his "blood-red efforts to be eloquent" as well as his speeches in which he saw "prefigured the lusty strides of John Bull." Democratic organs within the state took up the cudgels vigorously in his behalf, praised his speeches as "ardent and effective specimens of elocution," and declared he had been actuated by principle in abandoning an old and personal friend. Stress was laid upon the fact that he had renounced a highly lucrative law practice to aid Texas, returning from that country a poor man. It was added somewhat naively that his entire landed interest in Texas could be had for a good saddle horse and \$500 in gold. While the estimates assigned for his losses in Texas by partisan journals were doubtless exaggerated, the fact remains that large sums were laid out by him in equipping armed emigrants at the time of the Texas revolution. *Vicksburg Sentinel*, June 24, 1844; *Free Trader*, May 29, July 3, Aug. 4, 1844; *Woodville Republican*, May 25, 1844; *Inde-*

dressed to the Whigs of Louisiana and Mississippi Huston affirmed that his reasons for leaving the Whig party was not so much on account of the stand that party had taken on the annexation of Texas, but chiefly because that question involved the more serious one of the abolition of slavery. Huston had convinced himself that a Whig victory would mean an irretrievable blow at the institutions and prosperity of the South, ample proof of which was to be found in the utterances of the northern Whigs, the burden of which was the "sin and odium of slavery." The letter closed with the prediction that the anti-slavery crusade threatened utterly to prostrate the southern states or to force the union to its termination. Southern Whigs then should hesitate to fasten humiliating chains on the southern states or to drive them to desperation.⁴³ "Without Texas we cannot sustain slavery for ten years. If we must give up slavery, let us make the best terms we can; if not, let us unite for our preservation and be prepared for any emergency. If Texas is lost, political and fanatical abolitionism will stalk boldly into the halls of Congress, headed not only by the Adamses and Giddingses, but such as Webster and Seward, who will heap contumely and scorn on the Southern States and constantly endeavor to bring their moral character, their social relations, and their institutions into contempt." If the anti-slavery and abolition spirit continued to increase, then the Union could not and ought not to be preserved; and in any event it could not last unless based on an equality of feelings and interests.

As an ally of a foreign power Texas would be a constant menace to the southwestern border, whilst the possession of Galveston would cut us off from the navigation of the Gulf. To offset these impending dangers the only hope of the South lay in an alliance of that section with the democracy of the North and the states of the further West.⁴⁴ Thus did Huston set forth the views of the cotton South; his course in Mississippi politics at this time anticipated the attitude of such men as William J. Yancey, of Alabama, "the orator of secession," and of Robert Barnwell Rhett, of South Carolina. He was the most radical of the group of leaders whose

pendent Democrat, May 25, 1844; *Port Gibson Herald*, July 4, 1844. Cf. Kennedy, *History of Texas*, II, 241.

⁴³*Ibid.*, Sept. 18, Oct. 16, 1844.

⁴⁴Aug. 14, 28, Oct. 9, 1844.

names have been mentioned in connection with the aggressive campaign that was being waged for the extension of slave territory; under their guidance Mississippi was preparing to become "the most aggressive expansionist state in the Union in the years just preceding the civil war."⁴⁵

The fear that the South had begun to entertain for its peculiar institution from the time of the Missouri Compromise question⁴⁶ was naturally greatly intensified in consequence of the abolitionist propaganda, while in Mississippi pro-slavery sentiment had become crystallized prior to the decade with which we are dealing. When, therefore, Huston, Foote, and Brown pointed out the urgent need of "the annexation of Texas as essential to the future safety and repose of the Southern States," their arguments found a ready response in the minds of their hearers. Not only did the anti-slavery agitation in the United States lead "many of our southern citizens to long for separation and a union with slave-holding Texas";⁴⁷ it also accentuated the deep dread of a servile insurrection that hung over the slave section;⁴⁸ and as abolitionism assumed more and more of a political character, pro-slavery sentiment became intensified at the south, and grew more insistent in its demands for territory for further expansion.⁴⁹

But it was not only by governors, legislatures, and prominent

"Dodd, *Statesmen of the Old South*, 206. Among the numerous political gatherings which Huston addressed was one at Port Gibson in August. If we are to believe a Whig reporter who was present on that occasion, Huston after dwelling upon the paramount importance of annexation as involving the very existence of Southern prosperity, and more especially the fate of the institution of slavery, indulged in language something like the following: "That when it comes to fighting, the South could just whip any force that could be arrayed against it—we had the hearts and the hands to carry us in triumph through any war, foreign or domestic . . . of all the people on the footstool of the Almighty, we were unquestionably the most impregnable—we had the nerve, money and military to fight long, fight victoriously, to fight on a full belly without any prospect of want." *Port Gibson Herald*, July 18, 1844.

⁴⁶Conger, "South Carolina and Early Tariffs." *Miss. Val. Hist. Rev.*, V, 422.

⁴⁷Smith. *War with Mexico*, I, 83.

⁴⁸*Natchez Gazette*, Oct. 26, 1831. Cf. *Charleston Courier*, Aug. 18, 1835; *New Orleans Bee*, Sept. 25, 1835. In 1835 Huston contributed to the *New York Courier and Enquirer* a letter upon this subject. In 1850 the views set forth in this letter were elaborated in a very interesting pamphlet entitled "The Military Strength of the Southern States, and the Effects of Slavery Therein. Addressed to the Southern Convention."

⁴⁹Cf. *Free Trader*, Aug. 25, 1844; *Spirit of Kosciusko*, Feb. 27, 1839.

leaders that the argument in favor of immediate reannexation on sectional grounds was advanced; in numerous public meetings, many of them non-partisan, and representing practically every section of the state, resolutions were adopted demanding re-annexation as of vital importance to the security and perpetuity of southern institutions. In the meetings in which members of both parties participated, they avow their intention "to bury the tomahawk of party warfare and contend shoulder to shoulder for the cause of annexation." It is not surprising to find the makers of these resolutions condoning, as the legislature had done seven years before, the institution of slavery. "Southern slavery confers countless blessings on both master and slave," runs one resolution; another "solemnly asserts the right to extend slavery as our wishes or interest may dictate." "Re-annexation" is declared to be paramount to all other political questions of the day. The burden of scores of resolutions representing every section of the state is that annexation was "absolutely and indispensably necessary to the preservation of our domestic institutions," and that right soon. To oppose annexation—and it was only from the abolitionists that opposition came—was "to strike a death-stab at the institutions of the South in their tenderest and most vital point." While it was criminal and dangerous to postpone such a "great national blessing" as the annexation of Texas, the measure was a question of life and death with southern men, with the citizens of the slaveholding states. "So essential do we deem it to the very existence of our domestic institutions, and the security of our families and firesides, that all who oppose obstacles to this great measure are foes to the prosperity and enemies to the security of our domestic institutions." If Texas were refused, no alternative would be left but for her to make terms with England, "our deadliest enemy"; for the thing most to be apprehended at this time was British interference with slavery.⁵⁰ Allusion to the possibility of England exerting her influence in a manner dangerous to the peace and safety of the southern states is a continually recurring theme in the arguments advanced by the advocates of annexation; and there can hardly be a doubt that the supposed

⁵⁰A Whig journal referred to the madcap and revolutionary meetings, where the Democratic champions grappled with each other on the Texas question, *Columbus Whig*, May 23, 1844.

designs of Great Britain upon Texas was a potent factor in crystallizing the sentiment for annexation. It was held to be degrading to the national honor "to sue for the consent of any other power, to be deterred by foreign threats." "Should England, the imperious mistress of land and sea, the especial guardian of the negro race, wherever that guardianship can redound to her own advantage,"—be permitted to interfere with affairs on this continent? A deadly blow would be aimed at the South if England should join with Mexico in the abolition of slavery. In fact, Mississippi afforded a conspicuous instance of the "continuous drumbeat of resentment and defiance against foreign interposition."⁵¹

As a rule disunion was deprecated as "the greatest evil that could befall us," but now and then an element representing the "left wing" or the "chivalry," as it was termed, would obtain control of a meeting, and then resolutions of an even more sectional cast than those described above would be the order of the day. One such group of "rabid nullifiers" in a meeting at Columbus declared that no man should be voted for who had not been the open, fearless, and consistent advocate of annexation; if the treaty of annexation, then pending, should be rejected, the South should hold a convention to act as emergencies might require; in the language of Jackson, it was a case of "peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must."⁵²

With one important exception, the tone of the public prints of Mississippi touching annexation may be summed up in the words,—

⁵¹Smith, *Annexation of Texas*, 302. Cf. Garrison, *Dip. Cor. Tex.*, II, 240; *Washington Daily Globe*, June 19, 1844, quoting the *New York Herald* of June 18.

⁵²The description of the meetings is based in the main upon contemporary newspaper accounts.

"Without Texas," said Colonel William Davis, addressing a meeting at Holly Springs on May 15, "we are hewers of wood and drawers of water to the North." A group of citizens in Claiborne county declared that while they grieved to see the Union threatened, nevertheless they desired the immediate annexation of Texas. If justice to Texas was not consonant with our treaty stipulations to Mexico, and the chances of war with England, "we dare frankly and boldly to meet the responsibilities of the alteration," for there were causes that justified the abrogation of all treaties. The Texas Association of Holmes county declared in a meeting at Franklin on June 8 that the opposition of Clay and Van Buren was a "mere temporizing expedient of political chicanery to secure the support of Northern abolitionists."

“’twere well done if it were done quickly.”

The reasons for annexation which are dwelt upon with most insistence by the party organs are similar to those with which we have become familiar. The most widely read and influential party journal perhaps was the *Mississippi Free Trader*, published at Natchez, and edited for a time by John F. H. Claiborne, the well-known historian. From the beginning to the end of the campaign this paper strove to impress upon its readers the importance from every angle to the South of annexation. For this would ensure the safety of the southwest, secure the command of the Gulf, crush the abolitionist intrigues of England, and above all, give the slaveholding states a perpetual majority in the Senate of the United States. In editorial after editorial the Whigs of the North were charged with being open and avowed abolitionists, who were creating in the masses a deep and an undying hostility to the southern slaveholder,—“having read us out of the church of God they claim the privilege of interfering in our domestic relations and of promoting the abolition of slavery throughout the world.” As the day of election drew near, the *Free Trader* became almost frantic in its appeals to the “patriots of all parties” to awake to a sense of their danger involved in the election of Clay; the mass of the northern Democrats were with the South on the Texas question; only the election of the Democratic nominees could save the freemen of the South from being driven in a few years either “to abolish slavery or to defeat it with their swords.”⁵³

So far as the other Democratic journals are concerned, most of them simply reiterated the arguments of the *Free Trader* in favor of annexation. The radical *Vicksburg Sentinel* declared that all other questions were mere moonshine compared with the annexation issue, involving as it did the great contest between slave institutions and abolition. It solemnly warned southern Whigs “there is swelling up on all sides a feeling against slavery, increasing so fast that this may be the last Congress in which the

⁵³The *Vicksburg Sentinel*, Jan. 20, 1845, complained that scheming politicians were seeking to array the moral and religious feeling of the world against Southern institutions.

South will have it in her power to protect herself."⁵⁴ It was enough for the *Sentinel and Expositor* that Jackson had pronounced in favor of immediate annexation, for the editor would "sooner pin our political faith to the cast-off shoes of the old veteran and champion than to the brains of most other men." Admiration was expressed for the delicacy and honesty of Van Buren,—but "we go for Texas *now*, for Texas *always*."⁵⁵ The most important contribution made to the subject by the *Independent Democrat* was comprised in an editorial entitled "Party Divisions." In this the writer urged a new alignment of parties: in the first place, northern and southern Democrats had little in common save opposition to a national bank, which question was a "mere bagatelle"; too many northern Democrats were opposed to free trade, too many had voted for the admission of abolitionist petitions. The southern branch of the Whig party was more akin politically to southern Democrats than to the northern Whigs. In short, the time had come when parties in the South should unite against the enemies of free trade, of southern slavery and of the annexation of Texas.⁵⁶ Upon receipt of the news of the passage by the House of Representatives of the resolution in favor of annexation, the *Columbus Democrat* exclaimed: "Now is the golden moment; if the resolution is not acted on at this session, Texas will be lost to us forever,"—in which event a Whig Senate "must forever bear the curses and execrations of an outraged and an injured people."⁵⁷ The slogan of the *Holly Springs Guard*, the leading organ of the party in the northern part of the state, was "For annexation cost what it may"; for the measure was fraught with the immediate and permanent welfare of the South and West. In an editorial entitled "Measures, not Men," the editor used this language: "The Democracy of the South must proclaim to the world their determination to forsake all else and cleave to southern interests and institutions. Clay has but to speak and his

⁵⁴*Vicksburg Sentinel*, Feb. 7, 14, Apr. 2, 29, 30, May 6, June 12, Oct. 30, 1844; Jan. 30, Feb. 14, 1845.

⁵⁵*Sentinel and Expositor*, May 21, 1844.

⁵⁶*Independent Democrat*, Feb. 3, 17, Mch. 27, June 15, July 27, 1844. The *Free Trader*, Oct. 30, 1844, commented: "South Carolina erred, but was pure and patriotic."

⁵⁷*Columbus Democrat*, Apr. 27, May 11, 1844; Jan. 11, Feb. 15, Mch. 1, 1845. Cf. *Diary of James K. Polk* (Ed. Quaife), IV, 41.

servile horde cry, 'Vive le roi,'—but his election spells ruin for the South."⁵⁸

Radical in the extreme were the *Southern Reformer* and the *Jeffersonian*. The former journal declared the rejection of the treaty "an audacious outrage upon the rights of a free people. . . . The South indignantly calls upon the foul traitors who have despised and vilified her authority to resign their seats." The action of South Carolina in threatening disunion was condoned by the *Jeffersonian*: for the existence of such threats "our northern taskmasters must shoulder the responsibility." "Our Federal Union—it must be preserved; if it must be sacrificed, let the fair fields of the South be the theatre, where the last struggle shall be made."⁵⁹

The question may naturally be asked, What evidence is there that such arguments as were urged by the public prints of the state and by such men as Huston and Quitman for immediate annexation were decisive in influencing to any marked degree public sentiment? In other words, were those voters who turned the scale in favor of Polk and Dallas influenced by the danger to southern institutions rather than by any other issue of the campaign? So far as reflecting voters are concerned it would seem that the very vehemence with which Democratic journals and the more radical advocates of annexation depicted the dire consequences that would ensue in the event of Clay's election would cause their arguments to be dismissed as mere campaign gusto. On the other hand it is not difficult to believe that in the mind of many a voter the question would naturally arise, "Suppose after all a real danger does confront the South?" Few would stop to think that the election of Polk did not necessarily imply the immediate annexation of Texas, and a ballot cast for the Democratic nominees would register a protest against the unholy designs of England

⁵⁸*Holly Springs Guard*, Apr. 3, May 15, 29, July 10, 1844; Jan. 15, 22, Mch. 19, 1845. Cf. Smith, *Annexation of Texas*, 307: "Clay appeared cold, timid, and anti-Southern compared with Polk."

⁵⁹*Jeffersonian*, Aug. 1, 15, 1844; Mch. 1, 1845. The *Radical Democrat*, *Oxford Observer*, *Yazoo Democrat*, and *Ripley Advertiser* all urged that annexation would strengthen the political power of the slaveholding states; this was the first great desideratum, while the usual train of advantages were set forth which it was held would accrue in consequence of incorporating Texas within the Union. *Radical Democrat*, July 27, Aug. 10, 27, 1844; *Oxford Observer*, Aug. 10, 1844; *Yazoo Democrat*, Nov. 12, 1844; Dec. 10, 1845; *Ripley Advertiser*, Feb. 22, 1845.

upon Texas. For a number of reasons as has been shown the acquisition of Texas seemed a desirable thing to the people of Mississippi, just as it did to those of other southern states. From the "procurement of Louisiana" to the acquisition of the Philippines, the party of expansion has always triumphed at the polls when the issue has been put squarely before the American people. And while partisan organs naturally exaggerated the advantages that would accrue from the incorporation of Texas within the national domain, and depicted in lurid colors the danger to southern interests from the loss of Texas, when we take into consideration the prominence generally given to the annexation issue, the non-partisan character of many of the meetings held to further the cause of expansion, the comparatively wide-spread and deep-seated apprehensions entertained by reason of the abolitionist propaganda, it would seem the conclusion may fairly be drawn that one of, if not, the most potent argument with the mass of Democrats and certainly with those Whigs who deserted their party, was the fear of losing Texas and the consequent danger to the slave interests of the South. There can hardly be any doubt that the continued reiteration of the danger to southern institutions unless more slave territory were secured had its weight with Whig voters; for as the campaign drew to a close, evidence continued to accumulate of the falling away of voters within the ranks of the followers of Clay. And the most plausible explanation that can be offered for this was the fear that the election of the great Whig leader would involve the loss of Texas, with all the benefits that it was pictured would accrue from its possession, besides injuring the South in its most vital interests.

The support accorded Robert J. Walker by Democratic journals of the state may be accounted for on purely partisan grounds, though first and last Walker proclaimed "the only hope of the South is in the annexation of Texas"; but the deep admiration entertained for the character and talents of Calhoun by journals of every shade of political opinion within the state can be fully explained, it would seem, only by reason of the fact that above all others he was recognized as "the bold and fearless assertor of southern rights," "the undisputed champion of the domestic institutions of Mississippi and her sister states," the one who had put the subject of annexation "before the Senate and people of

the United States as a sectional question, necessary to the salvation of the South and her peculiar institutions."⁶⁰

From communications of individuals as set forth from time to time in different journals may be gathered the drift of public opinion so far as the "average citizen" is concerned. One such correspondent hailing from Warren county argued that the broad foundation upon which opposition to Texas rested was hostility to the domestic institutions of the South. He recurs to what had become almost a shibboleth of party doctrine: "If not annexed now, Texas will be lost forever. It is idle to preach delay; the time of action has arrived; if neglected, the opportunity of annexing Texas will probably be lost forever, and British emigrants controlling her elections will soon rear a power hostile to our government and deeply dangerous to the South."⁶¹ Another citizen expressed the belief that unless Polk was elected, in a few years the country would be divided in name, as it already was in fact, into a northern and a southern confederacy. "It is high time the South should begin to act with a concerted spirit."⁶² To another it was perfectly evident that the secret of the opposition to Texas was because the South believed annexation was necessary to give security and perpetuity to her slave property. To still another the great question was, "Shall we erect a bulwark against European attacks upon our domestic safety, or suffer a foreign power to get such a foothold as will enable it to break down the established institutions in which the South is vitally interested?"⁶³

In conclusion a few comments may be quoted as indicating the bearing of the election upon the question of annexation from the point of view of certain spokesmen of the Democratic party. During the course of a speech upon the Oregon bill, January 30, 1845, in the national house of representatives, Jacob Thompson of Mississippi spoke as follows: "If, in the late election, the American people did not clearly and distinctly settle the subjects of Texas

⁶⁰*Woodville Republican*, Apr. 6, 1844; *Vicksburg Sentinel*, Apr. 22, 1844; *Holly Springs Guard*, Feb. 14. Mch. 27, 1844; *Columbus Democrat*, Feb. 22, 1845. Cf. Dodd, *Jefferson Davis*, 72; Reeves, *Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk*, 137; Cole, *Whig Party in the South*, 12. Claiborne, *Life and Correspondence of John A. Quitman*, I, 111, refers to Calhoun's unpopularity in Mississippi at an earlier period.

⁶¹*Sentinel and Expositor*, June 12, 18, 1844.

⁶²*Free Trader*, Sept. 18, 1844.

⁶³*Independent Democrat*, July 27, 1844.

and Oregon, they settled nothing."⁶⁴ According to the *Columbus Democrat*, the issue had been fairly made up and a "majority of the people have decided that Texas must and shall be annexed."⁶⁵ "Annexation," declared the *Holly Springs Guard*, "was the great and paramount issue of the last campaign."⁶⁶ A meeting of the democratic association of Adams county affirmed that the voters had, in addition to declaring against the policies of the Whig party, solemnly decided "that the soil and sovereignty of Texas is not to be left to British cupidity."⁶⁷ The *Ripley Advertiser* was convinced that Texas and Oregon were directly in issue at the last election, a decision being explicitly expressed by the American people.⁶⁸

The *Southern Reformer*, upon receipt of the news of annexation, issued an extra edition heralding the "Great and Glorious Victory." "It is with feelings overflowing with joy that we announce to our people the annexation of Texas by the American Congress." To Robert J. Walker was due the thanks and praise of his fellow countrymen, "who will hold his action in grateful remembrance during his yet more brilliant career."⁶⁹ This was a well deserved tribute to the man to whom more than to any other the annexation of Texas was due. In annexation the *Vicksburg Sentinel* saw the rebuke of abolitionism and of the spirit that culminated in the Hartford convention. "The South is safe! The Union will be preserved!"⁷⁰ In an address to the citizens of Wilkinson county, Douglas H. Cooper, a politician of some local prominence, spoke as follows: "The Democrats of 1844 thought the best and in fact the only way to prevent the designs of England in regard to Texas was to take that republic under the protection of the United States, and fight for it *afterwards* if necessary. Hence in supporting annexation they were asserting and maintaining the great American doctrine of non-interference, by monarchical governments, with the affairs of this hemisphere."⁷¹ In a eulogy of Polk delivered

⁶⁴*Cong. Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., 221.

⁶⁵*Columbus Democrat*, Nov. 30, 1844.

⁶⁶*Holly Springs Guard*, Mch. 19, 1845.

⁶⁷*Free Trader*, Nov. 26, 1844.

⁶⁸*Ripley Advertiser*, Feb. 22, 1845.

⁶⁹Quoted by the *Brandon Desseminator*, Mch. 15, 1845.

⁷⁰*Vicksburg Sentinel*, Mch. 11, 1845.

⁷¹Contemporary pamphlet.

by C. S. Tarpley in the Mississippi House of Representatives, February 22, 1850, the speaker after referring to the fact that it was left to Polk to grace his administration by adding the "lone star" to our galaxy, gave expression to the following sentiment: "Here was a conquest not marked with blood, or sullied with national crime." By this act a fresh guarantee had been given to southern rights.⁷²

In summarizing the results that may fairly be deduced from the foregoing study, the conclusions arrived at are in a measure the same as those which have been set forth by other writers in dealing with the annexation question in the presidential campaign,—namely, that in Mississippi as elsewhere there was no clear-cut issue between annexation and anti-annexation, but that those who voted for Polk were influenced by a number of considerations; yet it is perfectly evident, it would seem, in view of the evidence that has been presented, that could every other issue have been eliminated, an overwhelming majority of the voters of Mississippi would have recorded a preference in favor of the immediate annexation of Texas. The most potent consideration by which the advocates of annexation were moved was unquestionably a desire to protect the declining slave interests of the South. Second only to this was probably the determination to prevent interference on the part of England, whose abolitionist designs were chiefly feared; practically every other reason why the presence of a foreign power upon the southwest border would work injury to the South and to the nation as a whole is to be met with in the arguments advanced by the advocates of annexation in Mississippi.⁷³

⁷²"Eulogy of James K. Polk," 23 (Jackson, 1850).

⁷³So far as the so-called economic arguments are concerned, it is difficult to believe that any of these had a decisive influence in arousing a genuine sentiment in favor of immediate annexation; of these the most potent perhaps was the danger to be apprehended from the possibility of Texas as an independent state supplying England with cotton to the injury of the Southern states.